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AUTHOR Bhola, H. S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on the premise that the myth of the "Twice-Born" perpetuated by the high-caste Hindus of ancient India; the metaphors of re-birth, freedom, and light used by new literatures coming out of adult literacy classes; and current socio-biological theories of human evolution all speak to the truly transformational character of writing (or literacy). A four-part argument is presented which supports the necessity of literacy in a print culture. Part I argues that literacy is a multiplier of the capacity to make "symbolic transformations of reality" and therefore literacy generates multiple economic opportunities, social possibilities, political participation and enrichment, and enjoyment of culture. Part II argues that the illiterate were always at a disadvantage, but in contemporary times the disadvantage of illiteracy has become both all-pervasive and deeply hurtful. Part III argues that the disadvantages of illiteracy, which appear internationally, are manifested as poverty, malnutrition, ill-health, infant mortality, low age expectancy, exclusion from services delivered by the state, and inequality before the law. Part IV argues that while literacy can transform inner spiritual space and outer social space, these processes must be deliberately and patiently cultivated. The conclusion claims it is in the interest of the privileged to pick up the poor and desperate, feed them, clothe them, humanize them and help them walk on their own two feet, all of which will require the rich to significantly decrease their own material standards of living. Three tables and 24 notes are included. (NH)

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TALES OF THE ONCE-BORN AND THE TWICE-BORN IN THE DIVIDED CITY: THE NECESSITY OF LITERACY IN A PRINT CULTURE

H.S. Bhola
Professor of Education
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN., 47405

Tel.: 812 856 8376
Fax: 812 856 8440

(c). The author

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Abstract

The myth of the Twice-Born perpetuated by the high-caste Hindus of ancient India; the metaphors of re-birth, freedom and light used today by new literates coming out of adult literacy classes in various parts of the world; and socio-biological theories of human evolution of the last half of the twentieth century, all speak to the truly transformational character of writing (or literacy) in regard to human cognitions and cultures. Even a cursory look at history, past and present, can help us understand how kings and colonizers, governors and missionaries, the high caste and the upper class, intuitively or with systematic deliberation, have excluded the powerless from contact with literacy; and imprisoned them in a system of continuing social, economic, political and cultural disadvantage. To invent an entirely possible, wonderfully human world for human beings, literacy must be universalized, and a new dynamic must be introduced to the dialectic between literacy and social development -- bringing critical consciousness to all persons, and a moral and just social order to all nations.

TALES OF THE ONCE-BORN AND THE TWICE-BORN

IN THE DIVIDED CITY:

THE NECESSITY OF LITERACY IN A PRINT CULTURE

There are four parts to the argument presented below:

1. Literacy is, first and foremost, a multiplier of the unique human capacity to make "symbolic transformations of reality"-- a concept to be explained below; and, thereby, literacy is generative of multiple economic opportunities, social possibilities, political participation and enrichment and enjoyment of culture. Literacy should, therefore, be justified for literacy's sake, because all else follows from this cognitive-communicative potential of literacy.

2. The illiterate, relative to the literate, were always at a disadvantage, but in contemporary times when the culture of power is also the culture of print and when this culture of print dominates each and every human community over the globe, the disadvantage of illiteracy has become both all-pervasive and deeply hurtful.

3. The disadvantages of illiteracy are manifested as poverty, malnutrition, ill-health, infant mortality, low age expectancy, exclusion from the services delivered by the state, and inequality before the law. These patterns of disadvantage appear internationally, between nations, within nations, between regions, and in urban and rural communities within countries.

4. While literacy can transform inner spiritual space by changing individual consciousness and outer social space through praxis, these processes must be deliberately and patiently cultivated and enhanced in learning groups as part of post-literacy. Critical consciousness needs to be kindled and rekindled by mentors leading groups of learners. New literates must be enabled to understand how uses of literacy may be blocked or mediated by existing institutions. All new literates should be helped to understand that these processes of transformation of inner space and social space demand hard work, perseverance, courage, and, often, personal sacrifice.

I

Myth, metaphor, and socio-biological theory have all come together to support the claim that literacy is a truly transformational experience, best described as the ontological remaking of the newly literate individual.

THE MYTH OF THE TWICE BORN

The high-caste Hindus of ancient India had mythologized themselves as the Twice-Born, thereby assigning to themselves a favored place in the Hindu cosmic order; and at the same time giving to themselves the right to imagine and invent new identities, and achieve personal growth and fulfillment denied to the lower castes -- a cruel example of the "strangely contrasting fates which human cultures offer to human beings (1)."

PRIVILEGES OF THE TWICE-BORN:

MONOPOLY ON LITERACY

It is significant to note that the Twice-Born Hindus had excluded the Once-Born lower castes from the world of ideas, reflection, and of reading. Only the Twice-Born had the right to listen to the recitations of the divine voice of the Vedas; and, later, when the Vedas had been committed to writing, only the Twice-Born could have access to the sacred text of the Vedas. In "medieval India, literacy appears to have been universal among men of the two upper classes of society, the Brahmans (priests, lawgivers and scholars) and Kshattriyas (rulers and military). Literacy was probably widespread, also, among the middle-ranking Vaishyas (traders, craftsmen and some of the peasantry).... The fourth class, of Sudras or manual laborers, ranked much lower. They formed an 'unclean', largely servile category, forbidden by law to amass wealth or to hear or recite the Sanskrit Vedas. It seems probable the Sudras, together with the still lower-ranking Untouchables or exterior castes, were largely illiterate in ancient as in medieval north India (2)." Such patterns of discrimination in regard to access to scriptures and to the written script are not, of course, unique to Indian history and culture. The dominant classes and hegemonic racial groups elsewhere in the world, and at other times in history, have, of course, subjected others to similar discriminations to perpetuate exploitative relationships over them.

METAPHORS OF RE-BIRTH, FREEDOM, AND LIGHT:

MARKING THE PASSAGE FROM ILLITERACY TO LITERACY

It is significant that the mythic category of the Twice-Born used by the Hindus of ancient India resonates today in the metaphors used by the newly literate as they describe their passage from illiteracy to literacy. Everywhere in the world the newly literate describe their progression from illiteracy to literacy as a re-birth. The other two most used metaphors are those of freedom, and light. The newly literate talk of having been reborn; of having lost their blindness, of coming out of darkness into the light; and of freedom to move, to think, and to grow. Even rudimentary literacy seems to give the semi-literate a new sense of identity. These same metaphors are used by individuals from all the world cultures -- in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Far East, Europe, North America -- by men and women, in cities and villages (3).

THE ROOTS OF METAPHORS

In the metaphors used by the newly literate, they do project the painful realities of their own social conditions and their terrible political plight. In today's world, literacy remains the great divider between social classes, between the have's and the have-not's. The non-literate and the semi-literate of today's societies are the once-born -- the lower castes in the global village. On the other hand, the functionally literate and the better educated have become the high-caste, the twice-born, capable of imagining unrestricted

futures for themselves and their families and actually inventing new individual identities and social destinies for themselves. Those who have acquired high-level literacy -- called "scribal literacy (4)" -- are the elite of present-day societies.

SOCIO-BIOLOGICAL THEORY OF HUMAN EVOLUTION:
RESONANCES AMONG MYTH, METAPHOR, AND THEORY

Socio-biological theory of the last half of the twentieth century talks of a point of culmination in the human evolution that can be best described as a collective rebirth of the human species. A million or more years ago, cultural anthropologists tell us, the Homo sapiens became capable of "symbolic transformations of reality" -- a capacity that remains unique to the human species (5). As a result, human being are able to arise from their immersion in reality and to consciously experience their reality; structure experienced reality to translate it into a wide range of symbol systems, including gestures, drawings, sculpture and speech; and they are thus able to communicate their symbolically codified messages to others within their community of shared symbols.

LITERACY AS SECOND SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION OF
ONCE SYMBOLICALLY-TRANSFORMED REALITY

Spoken language as a tool of symbolic transformations of reality marked the first great breakthrough, a most significant culmination in the evolution of the human race. The second great culmination in the evolution of the human race came some 5,000 years ago when human beings began codifying the symbol systems of

spoken language in new symbol systems of written languages. The move from speech to writing marked the second symbolic transformation of once transformed reality, thereby, starting an endless process of abstractions, of abstractions, of abstractions.

As each individual learns to read and write, he or she participates in the deeply transforming process of making second symbolic transformations of the already symbolically-transformed reality. Literacy theorists today are generally agreed on the transformational characteristics of the miracle of writing, that is, about the effects of literacy both in regard to individual cognitions and human cultures. As pre-literates become literate, their habits and capacities for cognitive behavior change. They are able to handle complexity that otherwise would be impossible. "Literacy allows for reflexive introspection which lead to cumulative advances in knowledge and procedures which, in turn, give rise to complexities and puzzles of different kinds. This affects notions of consciousness by making the implicit explicit and rendering the result more available to reflective inspection, external argument, and further elaboration (6)." While seven different intelligences have been identified -- linguistic, logical-mathematical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, spatial representation, musical thinking, and bodily-kinesthetic (7) -- language seems to remain central to the manifestation of general intelligence.

Individuals with scribal literacy, sitting in elite roles, have far-reaching influences on human affairs as they make and remake economic, social, political, legal, religious and cultural institutions. The ethos of erstwhile oral cultures changes as more and more of the common people become literate; and as literacy first influences individual cognitions and, ultimately, their shared cultures. Thus, the mythic category of the Twice-Born used by the Hindus thousands of years ago, and the metaphor of re-birth used by the newly literate today, both seem to have important theoretical content in terms of present-day semiotic theory.

WHO NEEDS PRINT WHEN VCR'S ABOUND? WE DO!

But why should literacy and advantage go together? Why should the illiterate suffer from economic, social and political disadvantage? Who needs literacy in the age of the VCR? Haven't the new electronic media of radio, television and the VCR made the printed word unnecessary? The answer to the immediately preceding question is an emphatic "No!" Our great hopes in the potency of electronic media have been repeatedly belied. These media are not always able to communicate self-contained messages. Radio needs support of pictures. Pictures need support of written legends. Television often needs both speech and writing. The electronic media do not have an identity independent of writing. They are produced by highly literate people and, as text, do in fact use the grammar of print. Finally, they have

come to be associated too strongly with entertainment rather than with education and extension.

Orality has become a disadvantage in today's culture of print. Orality has become a Ghetto, a world of the isolated, of the easily conditioned and programmed, with few rival messages to start the process of questioning. The pre-literate receive information from all over the world, but hardly ever donate information to anyone outside their communities. Meanwhile, important knowledge capital lies in print to be mined, and the pre-literate has no tools to do the digging. Oral messages are ephemeral, printed messages are not. There is no justification for a divided world -- one oral, the other literate.

THE CULTURE OF PRINT ALREADY PERVADES THE WORLD

The preceding implies that orality is certainly a disadvantage. The reality is that the oral culture is not a choice anymore because no self-contained oral cultures exist anymore on the globe. All cultures today are a mix of the oral and the print, and print is becoming more and more dominant in this mix. All institutions -- sacred and secular; economic, social and political -- are today built on the assumptions of literacy -- certainly of its leaders. We have become part of a global culture of print. Print has spread from California to Kalahari, from the sky-high pinnacle of Mount Everest to the dark depths of oceans. Print is encountered at work, at home, in the church, cinema house, police station, hospital, and funeral home. There is great merit in Jack Goody's suggestion that in

understanding societies we need to shift from an analysis of the "mode of production" to an analysis of the "mode of communication through literacy (8."

II

DISTRIBUTIONS OF ILLITERACY, BURDENS OF DISADVANTAGE

There are sad tales to tell about the distributions of literacy / illiteracy around the world and of the resulting divisions between the have's and the have-not's. The illiterate are poor, and the poor, in turn, are ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-housed, and are in ill-health, lacking in educational and cultural capital, reproducing a social class now called the underclass, while the Twice-Born are leading relatively more fulfilling lives in this divided world.

Finally, it is easy to see that the conditions of helplessness and hopelessness surrounding the illiterate and semi-literate around the world are the same whether viewed from the local perspective or from the global. Building on the data from the Human Development Report, 1993, published by the United Nations Development Program (9), it will be shown how all the five pillars of development -- human security, basic purchasing power, educational attainment, life expectancy, and participation -- are crumbling from down under the illiterate and the poor.

THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

It is a truism that the world map of illiteracy, is the same as the world map of poverty. Along with poverty go high

ratios of infant mortality, deaths of mothers in child-birth, and low levels of life expectancy. Literacy has thus indeed come to be a matter of life and death (10).

The UNDP Development Report, 1993, referred to above, talks of five pillars of development -- human security (as distinct from national security), basic purchasing power, educational attainment, life expectancy, and participation (11). All are dependent on literacy. In today's world education without literacy, if possible at all, has serious limits. Literacy, after all, is the portal to the house of knowledge and culture, and is not the house itself. Obviously, educational attainment is literally unattainable by the illiterate. The illiterate are almost always poor as well. How can they then have purchasing power? They are forced to live in tough neighborhoods where personal security, even minimally defined, is under attack by the street gangs, by the hopeless, the hustler and the dehumanized, and where the arm of the state brings coercion oftener than help. Caught in this cycle of poverty, the poor die through morbidity or by murder. They are excluded from participation in political processes unable to do anything for themselves.

The UNDP report quoted above ranked Japan first, Canada second, Norway third, and USA sixth according to the UNDP's composite development index. When the Blacks and Hispanics were separated from white population of USA, the ranks for Blacks and

Hispanics fell to 31st and 35th respectively. That put them among some of the developing countries of the Third World.

TWO THESES ON LITERACY IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Dietrich Goldschmidt and Eckhard Deutscher, two serious students of Third World development have recently published 12 theses on nonformal education, two of which relate to adult literacy. These two literacy-related theses are:

-- "Practical survival knowledge" is more important for the people in the traditional "informal" sector of the economy than the contents and certificates of the formal school system. Functional alphabetization is especially important for this reason. Pressure should therefore be exercised on UNESCO and the World Bank, urging them to rethink their investments in the programs of universal alphabetization.

-- "Alphabetization awakens and furthers social and political consciousness; this produces consequences which vary with cultural and sociostructural conditions. Experience has shown, for instance, in South Asia that functional alphabetization produces lasting improvements in the conditions of life in the villages on both the local and the regional level; alphabetization campaigns in Latin America created potential self-organization and protest reactions which demanded more democracy (12).

Adult Literacy works!

ILLITERACY AND DISADVANTAGE WITHIN NATIONS:

FOCUS ON USA

What is true at the international level, is repeated within individual nations, both rich and poor. The United States is a rich country, with the world's largest economy, but the stories of the illiterate and the poor in America are similar to the stories elsewhere in Bolivia, Botswana, Bombay, or Bangkok. It is said that in America, the problem is not of illiteracy but of functional illiteracy. This functional illiteracy, relative to the socio-structural conditions of America wreaks the same havoc on the lives of the poor and disadvantaged as traditional illiteracy brings to the poorest of the poor in the least developed countries of the world.

DOE'S LITERACY STUDY OF 1993

The study by the Education Department's National Center for Educational Statistics released in September 1993 (13) found that nearly half of adult Americans read and write so poorly that they are unable to function effectively in the workplace. Participants in the study were tested and scored in three areas: prose, document and quantitative. The prose score was based on ability to locate information in written text like newspaper articles or instructions. The document score was based on ability to locate facts in complex materials and combine it with prior knowledge to generate new information. The quantitative score was based on ability to glean mathematical information from documents. Results of these tests were as follows:

o. As many as 40 million of the nation's 191 million adults possess only the lowest level of skills, meaning they can total an entry on a bank deposit slip, locate the time or place of a meeting or form, or identify a piece of specific information in a brief news article. Many of the respondents were unable to complete even those tasks.

o. An estimated 50 million have the skills to calculate the total purchase, determine the difference in price between two items, locate a particular intersection on a street map and enter background information on a simple form.

o. An estimated 61 million adults can decipher information from long or dense texts or documents, while an estimated 34 to 40 million possess the highest skills required for the most challenging tasks. There were positive correlations between ethnicity and illiteracy. Blacks, American Indians and Native Alaskans, Hispanics and Asians were more likely than whites to have performed in the lower two of five proficiency levels. Those functioning at the lowest of five proficiency levels of literacy worked an average of 18 to 19 weeks in 1991, while those at the highest three levels of literacy reported working on average between 34 to 44 weeks. Those with the lowest level skills earned a median weekly salary of $230 to $245, compared with $620 to $680 for those at the highest level.

THE CENSUS FIGURES TELL THE SAME STORY

An analysis of the figures of the Census of 1990 tell the same story: which is about the direct correlation between

education and poverty. While racial discrimination accentuates the problem, the basic premise holds: the poor need higher and higher levels of literacy (and educational attainment) to get into the economic mainstream.

The following table is instructive.

	ALL RACES	WHITE	BLACK
Persons 25 years old or over in 1991 (in 1000's):	158,694	136,299	17,096
4 years of high school:	61,272	53,250	6,448
4 years of college:	34,025	30,283	1,966
Unemployed:	6.7%	6.0%	12.4%
Median Family income in previous year in constant 1990 dollars:	35,353	36,915	21,423
Life expectancy at birth (1990) in years:	75.4	76	70.3
	72.0 M	72.6 M	66.0 M
	78.8 F	79.3 F	74.5 F

Figures abstracted from the Statistical Abstracts of the United States 1992. (112th Edition). Lanham, Maryland: Bernan Press.

ILLITERACY AND DEATH

The illiterate in America not only live less well, they also live less long. A recent study prepared by the non-partisan National Center for Health Statistics (14) that linked education to income and to death rates among Americans, said that men and women aged 25 to 44 without high school education faced death rates about three times greater than college graduates, and middle-aged people without high school degrees faced death rates about two times greater than college graduates.

THE TALE OF A CITY: DETROIT

Since I speak today at the campus of the Wayne State University, addressing mostly Detroiters, I will like to relate some of my remarks to the context of the city of Detroit. I must apologize for misconstructions even before I proceed. This is after all my first visit ever to Detroit and all I know about Detroit is from newspapers and television and some statistical and encyclopedic reference works. Most newspaper references used below are to The Detroit News and Free Press and The Detroit Free Press during the one month of September 1993.

Through this translucent veil of half-ignorance, Detroit appears to be not only a divided city, but in some ways also an abandoned city. After twenty years' leadership of Mayor Coleman Young, things have improved, but life is still very difficult. To begin with, population has decreased. In July 1992, population was 1,013,974, down by 7,000 from 1991 and by 14,000 from 1990. There is white flight. Jobs have disappeared. New

entrepreneurs are discouraged from coming to the city to do business. Detroit was ranked 45th among the country's 50 largest metro areas as a place to develop business (15).

Personal security and economic development remain the two main concerns. There is no dearth of drug houses for the hopeless and of dens of prostitution for the desperate. Crime is rampant. In an exit poll conducted during the primary elections during September 1993, the answers received were frightening:

	BLACK	WHITE
Have you ever been a crime victim?	19%	33%
Has a family member ever been a crime victim?	44%	48%
Has a close friend ever been a crime victim?	85%	92%
No mention	7%	5%

The city leads the country in "hot cars." In 1992 alone, 27,344 cars were swiped. There were 700 murders in the city. Unemployment in the city has arisen from 7.2 % in 1970 to 19.7 in 1990. Median income has gone from $25,000 down to 18,742 during the same time. Those below the poverty line have increased from 14.9% to 32.4% of the population. Detroit is on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's "troubled housing"

list (17). Ill-health is widespread. According to a news report of September 17, 1993, the number of children with Tuberculosis has doubled since 1990. Typically, adults spread the lung disease to children in their homes. Parents either do not get treatment or don't know they have TB (18).

Education is in crisis. As Rev. Wendell Anthony, president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP said at a news conference recently: "We want students to put down the guns and pick up the books (19)." The Governor may have unnecessarily accentuated a crisis in formal education. If schools are starved where will the money come from for adult basic education and adult literacy? Here is a good suggestion -- something additional for NAACP's already crowded agenda. NAACP should do literacy work among all black people -- men and women, old, young and children should all be brought within the print culture.

There is a spiritual crisis as well: lives hooked on thrills, lacking in compassion. Imam W. Deen Mohammed, the leader of the International Group of Muslims during his recent visit to Detroit said: "Let us not exaggerate the size of the problem. The size of ignorance is bigger than the size of racism (20)." He asserted that it was the decline of the family and the loss of moral standards that were sapping the strength of Black Americans. This is the theme that I will return to in the last section of my presentation.

There are good signs. The leadership is in good hands, Good people are offering themselves for elections to public

offices. "The voters clearly want their city government to be clean, even inspirational, as well as competent (21). While there is white flight, the Blacks are staying in the city. According to the 1990 statistics, out of the people with household incomes above $42,722, whites who left numbered 34,281 and whites who remained numbered 56,478; blacks who left numbered 5,802 and blacks who remained numbered 194,448 (22).

III

LITERACY IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF SELF AND SOCIETY

Earlier in the paper, we made the assertion that human beings are the only creatures on earth capable of making symbolic transformations of reality; and that literacy is the great multiplier of this uniquely human capacity. We suggested also that literacy thus stands self-justified. There is nothing ridiculous about promoting literacy for literacy's sake. Indeed, it makes complete sense. Theory compels and experience confirms that literacy is potential added and even rudimentary literacy can initiate within the learner the process of the social redefinition of self.

But potential added is not necessarily potential actualized. Existing potential among individuals and cultures is not always fulfilled. The process of actualization of the potential added by literacy to individuals and collectivities is not deterministic but is dialectically related with conditions both internal and external. Neither the internal nor the

external conditions may be completely congenial to the practice of literacy by the new literate. Left to himself or herself, the new literate may not be able to engage fully and fruitfully in the practice of literacy. Habits of individual reflection as well as the ways of social reformation are best learned and practiced within groups of people of shared interests, with a mentor guiding. Too often in literacy work the full potential of literacy has not been actualized because the new literates had been left to fend for themselves after they had been taught to read and write.

A kind of a post-literacy phase should be organized after all literacy work in which the new literates are enabled not only to retain their reading and writing skills but also to actualize their potential as new literates enabling them (i) to enter and roam in their own inner spaces, learning to reflect on their own values and experiences and to acquire critical consciousness; and (ii) at the same time, enabling them to engage in praxis, learning to put democratic pressures on existing structures and institutions and demand that these institutions and structures be responsive to their needs.

In addressing the new literate, we seek not to blame the victim. As the following graphic should indicate, the oppressor and the oppressed, the have's and the have-not's, men and women, those belonging to the mainstream and those of the minority should all learn new values and ways and learn to sacrifice the personally dear for the common good.

	WHITE	NON-WHITE
		X, Y, Z
Upper and Middle Classes	Spiritual Development	Spiritual Development
	Structural Response	Structural Response
Lower and the new Under Classes	Spiritual Development	Spiritual Development
	Structural Response	Structural Response

In the table above, the non-white category includes all minorities, here called X, Y, and/or Z. Note the use of the new social category of the underclass which American sociologists have taken note of during the last decade or more. The processes whereby the new literate could be enabled to use literacy to reinvent personal identity, a new community and a just social order are complex. There are two correlated realities that must be brought into play: (1) spiritual change in the inner space of the individual and (2) structural change in the social space

surrounding the individual. Structural change are a part of the larger political processes in which we should all -- men and women, and literate and pre-literate -- participate to the best of our ability. However, what I have called spiritual changes in the inner space are both more subtle and more significant, simply because they are amenable to our individual values, convictions and decisions.

CHANGES IN THE INNER SPACE:

NEW VALUES, NEW CONVICTIONS, AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

When talking of spiritual change, I am not speaking as a missionary of some organized religion, or as a Yoga teacher asking you to register in my classes for meditation. What I do ask is that we all come together in literacy classes, learner groups and cultural posts to learn from each other and to grow together under chosen mentors. What I seek to do is to invite your attention to an old fashioned idea -- the matters of the human spirit. I am talking of the necessity of developing critical consciousness and using serious reflection on the values we have been sold and which we have already internalized. I am asking for the assumptions of new aspirations for self, new ideas about community, new imaginings for the social order.

I am implying, of course, that without literacy, the acquisition of critical consciousness and reflection that I suggest is less likely than with literacy, and maybe even impossible. Paulo Freire's assertion that reading the word and reading the world are connected is more than a clever

alliteration between word and world. The illiterate are, of course, capable of deep sensibilities and of great wisdom, but in today's world wherein the collective wisdom of humanity is codified in a multiplicity of complex symbol systems and wherein institutions both secular and sacred work by the book, making sense of the world and one's place and possibilities in it, constitute a difficult and perhaps an impossible tasks for the illiterate and the semi-literate. Again, critical consciousness is more than an emotion. It is a special kind of learning, involving knowledge that is most deeply felt. It is the personalization of ones' historicity. It is to become a sociologist of one's own social setting and a political scientist of one's own sorry plight. Critically conscious individuals become aware of how the world works and begin to understand their place in this world -- determined by the accidents of birth, and shaped by social, political and economic forces.

We must use our critical consciousness and reflection to break out of the thraldom of the culture of consumption and thrill, and in Pope Paul's words, escape from "the culture of death." The American "dream machine" fabricated by the media moguls must be neutralized, if not smashed. Deprogramming ourselves from this dehumanizing brutish calendar of socialization is thus the first task. The American dream must be humanized. As individuals, the new literate (and the pre-literate), the poor, and the disadvantaged, must overcome

profligacy and develop new values of inner reflection, of an ethics of frugality, and of the culture of contentment.

FROM NARCISM TO COMMUNITARIANISM

From a preoccupation with self, and values of so-called rugged-individualism, we must move to values of communitarianism. While there are several friends of the poor and the disadvantaged in America and abroad, the illiterate and the poor, the Blacks and the Hispanics must help themselves and their own communities. The elite among these communities must live among their own people, lead their own people and make the sacrifices that leadership demands. The challenge is truly colossal, but it requires a second socialization of half the nation -- indeed of the whole nation because both the "advantaged" and the "disadvantaged" must learn to look at things differently.

NEW CONCEPT OF WORK AND THE NEW WORK ETHIC

As we use literacy for inventing new identities and communities, we must invent new concepts of work and of work ethic. Literacy and further education following literacy should not be seen merely as a matter of exchange for a wage. Work within one's own community should be considered noble work; and work undertaken outside the community in offices and factories should demonstrate a new work ethic.

Unfortunately, the work ethic of the poor is in disrepair. In a recent study, entitled, <u>High Hopes, Long Odds</u>, conducted for the Lilly Endowment, the researchers who wrote the report found that while Indiana's teenagers, urban and rural, black and

white, all had fairly high aspirations and were looking forward to professional careers and all the rewards typical for the middle class, they were working little to merit what they aspired for.

ACCOMMODATING WOMEN AND GIRLS

Critical consciousness does not come in small parts, part by part. The new critical consciousness must include both men and women. The new literate individual must not treat women as mere sex objects. The new community must take responsibility for their offsprings. The new sexual morality need not dismiss celibacy, and virginity as jokes. The responsibility of reproduction should be seen as part of social reproduction as well.

FROM RACIAL GROUPS TO CLASS CATEGORIES

At home in America, to begin with, the Blacks and the Hispanics may use racial categories for positive commitment. But soon it will be time to use class categories rather than race categories in reinventing futures.

INCLUDING THE DIASPORA

The people now imprisoned in the Ghetto must begin to expand their world to create new spaces for idealism, for service to fellow man worse-off than they are themselves, and for sacrifices to great causes. The African diaspora and the Hispanic diaspora can both provide spaces within which the Blacks and the Hispanics can change their ordinary lives into extra-ordinary lives. What can be done in this regard is already clear

from the success of African-African American Summits organized by Reverend Sullivan on the continent of Africa -- in Abidjan in 1991 and in Libreville in 1993 (23).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Writers on literacy topics and speakers making speeches on literacy, can address the illiterate and the semi-literate only indirectly because those audiences can be reached directly only by those who work with them in literacy groups. The same is true today of my presentation. I have not been able to talk to the pre-literate and semi-literate. But, I hope, that through you as mediators, I will be able to reach them with my message. I am asking them to learn to read the word so that they may also read the world in which they live. I am asking them to develop critical consciousness, to refuse to be programmed by the multiplicity of dream machines turned on them day and night. I am asking them to practice self-denial and self-discipline, to develop strong work ethic and the ability to delay gratifications, to avoid a life of thrills, and acquire instead an ethic of frugality. I ask them to practice civic morality and serve their community. In asking all this, I am not blaming the victim and absolving the victimizer. I am only pointing out that without self-help and perseverance there is little hope for change.

At the same time, the already privileged of today's world must accept all the same virtues that I have preached to the poor. The privileged among us must understand that the great

economic and social disparities are not only unjust, but they are also socially disruptive and dangerous. The rich and the powerful today have established life-styles and levels of consumption fit for Kings. The media have let all the world see how the new royalty lives. Thereby half the world feels "relatively" poor or desperately poor. There are, of course, billions of others who are genuinely hungry. The desperately poor and the terribly hungry of the world simply will not let the privileged enjoy their privileges in quiet comfort. The appetites of the dispossessed have been artificially whetted, they have been taught to ask for instant gratification, while the media have taught them the technology of social disruption and bloody terror. It is in the interest of the privileged to pick up the poor and the desperate from the garbage heap of history, and feed them, clothe them, humanize them and help them walk on their own two feet. Obviously, the rich must significantly decrease their own material standards of living (24). That will require that a new spirit prevail and new structures emerge.

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